

Nathaniel Irish House
704 South Front Street
Philadelphia
Philadelphia County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-1013

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PA
51-PHILA
243-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Division of Design and Construction
120 South Third Street
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

ADA.COM

NATHANIEL IRISH HOUSE

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Street Address: 704 South Front Street, Philadelphia, Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania

Present Owner: Earle R. Kirkbride and Beatrice H. (his wife)

Present Occupant: Owner

Present Use: Dwelling

Brief Statement of Significance: Location (old No. 274) on Delaware Front Street, Southwark, an important residential and commercial area in the eighteenth century. This and adjoining houses also built by Nathaniel Irish. These and many other houses of the same period remain along Front Street. House-carpenter-builder Nathaniel Irish was a member of The Carpenters' Company of Philadelphia 1762-1769; owner or co-owner of the Union Furnace, Hunterdon County, New Jersey; and Captain of an Artillery Company of Artificers. The house is typical of its period.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: Nathaniel Irish 1762-1769; Anthony Noble 1769-1774; William Jones and descendants 1774-1890; John McDowell 1890; Augusta Chance and son 1890-1913; Rose Albus 1913-1919; Seaman or Simeon Chromczak and descendants 1919-1955; Earle R. Kirkbride 1955-(present owner).
2. Date of erection: 1762-1769
3. Architect, builder, suppliers, etc.: House-Carpenter-Builder Nathaniel Irish (1737-1816).
4. Original plans, construction, etc.: Insurance Survey, Philadelphia Contributionship #1604, April 28, 1772 (copies in Philadelphia Historical Commission, City Hall, Philadelphia).
5. Notes on alterations and additions: Insurance Survey, Philadelphia Contributionship #13971, April 11, 1893; Measured Drawings and Inventory, January 1957, George A. Robbins, AIA, Reg. Architect (copies in Philadelphia Historical Commission, City Hall, Philadelphia).

6. Important old views and references:

- Philadelphia Historical Commission, 634 City Hall,
Philadelphia 7, Pa.
Department of Records, 163, 170, 171 City Hall,
Philadelphia 7, Pa.
Philadelphia Contributionship Insurance Co., 212 South
Fourth Street, Philadelphia 6, Pa. (MS Surveys, long-
hand, reproductions, Philadelphia Historical Commission).
Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1300 Locust St.,
Philadelphia 7, Pa. (William Allen, mss., inventory
of estate of Nathaniel Irish, longhand).
Carpenters' Company of Philadelphia, 320 Chestnut Street,
Philadelphia 6, Pa. (MS Articles and Minutes, 1762-
1769, longhand).
Pennsylvania Archives--Vol. 2, p. 106; Vol. 3, pp. 1086,
1094, 1100, 1102, 1103; Vol. 4, pp. 188, 638.
Pennsylvania Colonial Records--Vol. 10, p. 291.
Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, XIX (1895),
pp. 351-358.
Francis B. Heitman, Historical Registry of Officers of the
Continental Army (Washington, D. C., 1893 and 1914), p. 314.
T. G. Tousey, Military History Of Carlisle (Richmond, 1939),
pp. 99, 410.
Henry C. Mercer, Decorated Stove Plates (Contributions to
American History by the Bucks County Historical Society,
No. 6, Doylestown, Pa., 1899), p. 19, and The Bible in
Iron (Bucks County Historical Society, Doylestown, Pa.,
1914), p. 101, plate 166 (see Part II, fireplaces, of
this report).
Norris S. Barratt, Outline of the History of Old Saint
Paul's Church (Philadelphia, Colonial Society of
Pennsylvania, 1917, p. 34).
Correspondence with Dr. Louise Hall, Duke University,
Durham, N. C. (copies in Philadelphia Historical
Commission).

- B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure: Nathaniel
Irish was one of the petitioners for Saint Paul's Church
(east side of Third Street below Walnut, opposite Willing's
alley) in 1760, although the building was not erected until
1765. (It is conceivable that Nathaniel Irish had some
part in this building, but no proof has been found, and it
was remodeled by William Strickland in 1830.) Nathaniel Irish
purchased several properties in the District of Southwark
1760-1766. That he built several houses on these properties
is recorded in deeds and insurance records. Three houses
built in 1763 on the east side of George Street (now South
American Street) are described in Philadelphia Contribution-
ship surveys, numbers 1678, 1679, and 1680, in 1773 and
later in an advertisement in the Pennsylvania Packet,
December 3, 1778. A son, Nathaniel, and daughter, Mary,

were baptised July 19, 1769, at Gloria Dei, Old Swedes' Church, according to the Register of Baptisms at Wicaco. A son, William Beckford, born August 23, 1773, later became U. S. Marshall during the term of President Monroe and his son, Dallas Cadwallader Irish (grandson of Nathaniel), became the hereditary member of the Society of The Cincinnati.

On July 26, 1775, Nathaniel Irish wrote "To the Honourable Committee of Safety for the City of Philadelphia, &c." describing fully his idea for a "Boat or Gundalo" for the further defense of the Delaware. At the opening of the Revolution he made cannon at his Union Furnace, Hunterdon County, New Jersey, until the British blew it up. He organized an Artillery Company of Artificers and served as Captain under Colonel Benjamin Flower from February 7, 1777, to January 1, 1783, commanding one of the four companies stationed at the Washingtonburg Public Works near Carlisle, Pennsylvania. In 1783 he was granted land for military service and purchased additional property on Plum Creek, Pitt Township, Allegheny County (Pittsburgh), Pennsylvania. In 1805 his name led the list of twelve Vestrymen of Trinity Church (Old Round Church), Pittsburgh, on the perpetual charter obtained by the church from Governor Thomas McKean. (Conceivably Nathaniel Irish designed and/or built this octagonal church, although documentary proof has not yet been found.)

C. Supplemental Material:

1. The following direct quotation from Insurance Survey, Philadelphia Contributionship #1604:

Survey.^d April 28,th 1772

A house for anthony Noble Situate on the West Side of front Street Continue.^d in the district of Southwark where Cap.ⁿ Wade dwells -

20 feet front - 34 feet deep - 3 Storys high - 9 inch party walls - 2 Rooms on a floor - plaster.^d partitions - The first story wainscuted pedistal high, Chimney Brest, tabernacle frame, mantle Cornish, frett Cornish, Strait Joint floor - Chimney Brests Scerting Surbass & Single Cornish in 2^d Story Chimney Brest Scerting & Surbass in 3^d Story Garot plaster.^d - a way out on Roof & iron Rails up - modillion eaves in front The kitchen 17 1/2 by 10 1/2 feet 2 Storys high 9 inch walls - the whole painted inside & out and New

Gun.g Bedford

House	£ 400)	£ 450 @ 30/. per cent	producing a deposit of	£ 6.1
Kitchen	- 50)			

2. The following direct quotation from Insurance Survey, Philadelphia Contributionship #13971, April 11, 1893:

Survey of a Brick Dwelling, belonging to Mrs. Augusta M Chance. Situate on the West side of South Front St. No. 704, S. of & near

Bainbridge. Being 19 2/3' front (including an alley 3' wide) by 34 1/2' deep, 3 Stories and Attic; (the part over the alley being only 30' deep). A Back B'ld'g. 10 2/3' x 18', 2 stories. Walls 9" & 11" thick.

1st story - Front Bldg. 2 rooms & passage - y.p. floor, 8" mld. base, 3" m'ld'gs. 2 sash doors, 12 & 4 lts. 8 x 10; one 4 l't. 8 x 10 & one 6 l't. 8 x 14 transoms; 4 breast closets; 3 with 4 doors each; 2 plain wood mantels; one with marble slab. 2 front windows 12 l'ts. 8 x 16 & one back 24 - 8 x 10 outside close shutters.

Ceiling 9 ft. high - Enclosed winding stairs
from Cellar to Attic -

2nd Story - 2 rooms & stairs landing - Floor &c. as in 1st Story - one sash door, 4 l'ts. 10 x 28 and 10 x 8; 4 breast closets, 4 shelves each; 2 plain wood mantels - 6" chair rail of p'td. wood - 3 front windows 18 l'ts. 8 x 10; outside venetian blinds. One back do. 24 l'ts. no blinds - Ceilings 9' high.

3rd Story - Same as 2nd Story - Floor of wide w.p. boards - Base & Mouldings as in 2nd story - 2 sash doors, 4 - 11 x 18 & 2 - 10 x 28; front windows 12 - 8 x 10; back do. 16 - 8 x 10 - 4 Closets as in 2nd story 2 plain wood mantel shelves on do. brackets Ceiling 8' high-

Attic Story - Same as 3rd do. floor, no base on m'ld'gs - 2 dormer windows 12 - 8 x 10 - Cl'gs. 7' high -

Back bld'g - 1st story - one room - y.p. floor, plain base & casings one closet; one window 24 l'ts. 8 x 10, outside close shutters - one plain wood mantel shelf on do. brackets -

Ceiling 8 1/2' high - Enclosed winding stairs from
Cellar to 2nd story

2nd Story - One room - Floor &c. as in 1st story - one closet; mantel shelf of wood - 2 windows 12 - 8 x 10; ceilings 8 1/2' - Cellar - natural floor Roof - Double pitch over Main B'ld'g, single do. back; all covr'd. with tin. Round tin spouting & do. gutters; wood sills; stone steps in front - Cellar doors in front, with spandrels of brick & stone - Trap door in roof with fixed step ladder to same - Walls & ceilings papered, except in the Attic. Doors 4 and 2 pn'ld; windows all have solid frames.

4/11/93

Wm. W. Trapier, Surveyor

Note - Stucco Cornice in 1st & 2nd stories - Main B'ld'g -

Policy No. 13971

\$1,500. at 2%

\$30-

Agreed to be Correct

OTHER CONCURRENT INSURANCE

ALLOWED UNTIL NOTICE IS REQUIRED

Augusta M. Chance

I have examined the above and find a fire escape has been placed
on rear of house

Burton D. Blair,

Inspector

Nov. 10, 1904

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Typical of period, fine proportions, hand-crafted details (see chimney walls and fireplaces); adjoining houses built by same house-carpenter-builder.
2. Condition of fabric: Very good.

B. Technical Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: 3-1/2 stories with two-story back wing - cellar under both. 20' front (including 3' alley in first story) by 34' deep (part over alley only 30' deep), back or kitchen wing 11' x 18'.
2. Foundations: Rubble stone, some large blocks tooled; 4 stone vault arches under alley; one of the same for each chimney (3); these have single course brick arch ring.
3. Wall construction: 11" and 9" walls, brick 2 3/8" x 3 1/4-3/4" facade laid in Flemish bond, 6 courses to 16" moulded brick watershed (painted); side and rear 5 courses common bond to 1 header course, some random glazed brick; glazed headers form solid diamond in rear wall (back wing), which has no openings.
4. Porches, stoops, bulkheads, etc.: White marble stoop, threshold and 2 steps gray soapstone; door opening from third story rear indicates a "flat for drying clothes" that was once built on roof of back wing.
5. Chimneys: Brick, two 3-flue chimneys on north wall, one 2-flue chimney on west or rear wall of back wing, all plastered but usable (kitchen flue has gas exhaust stack inserted); some flues have clay chimney-pots.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Square-head front doorway with transom, later sash door. Arched alley-way in first story with plank gate, second story over. Square-head kitchen doorway with 19th century paneled door; third story rear 18th century door, double-faced, strap hinges (three wide planks have studs outlining panels on reverse side).
 - b. Windows and shutters:
Facade: 3 bays, 2 windows first story, later framing 19th century moulding, later sash; 3 windows second

story, plank and moulding frames, later sash; 3 windows third story, original frames, original sash but muntins removed.

Rear of front building: 1 large window in each story, original plank and moulding frames; later folding plank shutter in first story; third story original sash 16 lights 8" x 10" glass; 1 small casement window second and third stories, single sash, 3 lights.

Side wall of back wing: 1 window first story, original plank and moulding frame, later sash, pair of 18th century shutters, double-faced, 2 planks with long strap hinges and studs outlining 3 panels of face, fish-tail holders; 2 windows second story, original frames and sash, 12 lights (6 over 6), 8" x 10" glass (some early glass); 2 square-head, ridge dormers (one front, one back) have original framing, later sash.

7. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Steep gable roof, front building; shed roof back wing; gable roof framing pinned with wood dowels, no ridge pole; long, early shingles remain under roll roofing, which is water-tight.
- b. Cornice, eaves: Wide moulding and modillion cornice front; wide moulding back; frame box eaves, tin gutter front, hanging tin gutter back.
- c. Dormers, cupolas: Gable roof has plain ridge dormer front and back. Later sky-light replaces original trap door.

C. Technical Description of Interiors:

1. Floor plans: 19'-7" x 34' - 2 rooms and entry; 11' x 18' - 1 room, back wing. See measured drawings by George A. Robbins, A.I.A.
2. Stairways: Cellar to first floor, replacement part spiral and straight; first story to second, replacement dog-leg, 2 landings; second story to garret, original spiral around board newel; scars of built-in frame ladder to loft and trap door in roof (now sky-light).
3. Flooring: Cellar earth; first story narrow hardwood replacement over 6/4" random width pine, "straight joint" (doweled), split lath and plaster under (entry has not been covered so construction is visible); second story original random width pine, cut nails at joists, plastered under; third story replacement narrow hardwood except in chimney closets random width pine; garret wide plank laid opposite lower floors; loft wide plank in center.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plastered, brick bearing walls not furred, board partitions with split lath, ceilings split lath, all plastered, layers of lime-wash; replacement partitions first story stud, lath and plaster; chimney-wall in each room has paneled cladding, breasted closets, paneled doors; first story middle room has tabernacle frame, fretted cornice and mantel moulding, paneled dado or wainscoting "pedistal high" 2 walls; second story wide moulding cornice and chair-rail, matched lumber wall partitions off bathroom in middle room; rear wing kitchen chamber has only chimney cornice, 1 breasted closet, high moulding mantel; third story chair-rail, chimney cornice, 2 breasted closets each, front paneled over chimney, back plastered; plaster is original except for patches and replacement partition in first story; stairwell and first and second stories papered.
5. Doorways and doors: First floor--entry and between rooms later "French" 15-light doors; replacement door at breasted closet front room; middle room original paneled doors cellarway and breasted closets; kitchen one paneled door at breasted closet. Second floor--all original paneled doors except to bathroom; original paneled doors third story and garret (glass replaces 2 panels in each door off stairwell entry in each story).
6. Trim: First story all replacement except recessed, curved, butterfly shelves in front closet and one closet of middle room; second story replacement of window trim except kitchen-chamber moulding, doorways have original "double architraves"; third story original moulding trim, doorways "single architraves."
7. Hardware: H and L hinges on all original paneled doors except cellar door; 4 closet doors have original wood knobs; an 18th century key found in cellar earth floor.
8. Lighting: Electric
9. Heating: Original usable fireplace in each room (except kitchen, which has not been opened). First floor front straight-arch, plastered recess, gray Pennsylvania marble slabs (impressions of double row of 5" tiles under top slab) scar of single moulding trim; middle room kneed moulding around single row of Delft blue tiles (all same design, many missing), recess plastered, 24-1/2" x 26-1/2" cast-iron fireback found behind false brick lining (cited as a side plate of a six-plate stove by Henry C. Mercer, The Bible in Iron and Decorated Stove Plates from a plate found in a lumber room in Bethlehem, Pa., in 1897, named "The Conqueror"; see references under Part I, A, 6 of this

report). Second floor front and middle rooms straight-arch plastered, single moulding trim, middle room has 18th century square tile hearth; rear wing elliptical brick arch, formerly plastered. Third floor front and back straight arch plastered. Stove-pipe holes made in all chimneys (panel in middle room, first story, restored). Central gas heat, hot-water convector radiation.

D. Site:

1. Orientation: House faces east. It is a typical row house built on "street line."
2. Enclosures: New 6' cypress fence, redwood posts.
3. Outbuildings: Frame "necessary" matched boards, shed roof (2 compartments now used for storing garden equipment and supplies), northwest corner of 70' lot.
4. Walks, driveways, etc.: Brick-paved 3' alley-way front to back under second story; front house-line to curb replacement cement paved.
5. Landscaping, gardens, etc.: Brick-paved back yard, small planted areas, one fast-growing tree (paper mulberry) planted at rear of yard (from 6' to 25' in 4 years).

Prepared by Beatrice H. Kirkbride for the
Philadelphia Historical Commission
September 1959

Addendum To
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REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey
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Washington, D.C. 20240

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